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ABSTRACT

The author presents an evaluation of an inservice course on "Classroom Strategies for Dealing with Racism and Sexism" which sought to foster both personal and societal change. The training model, containing four main elements (personal power, group support, critical awareness, and action) was compared to a control model focusing on the analysis and modification of teaching behavior, involving evaluation techniques, conferencing skills, human relations, and microteaching. Results from the evaluation of program participants are presented, indicating significant increase in all four elements of the personal/social change model. The theoretical speculation that the course catalyzed an integration of personal and social change is collaborated by practical evidence. The findings suggest that teacher educators can effectively catalyze teachers' capacities to understand and encourage change on both a personal and societal level. (MJB)

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INTEGRATING PERSONAL AND SOCIAL CHANGE IN TEACHER TRAINING: A PROJECT REPORT

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ABSTRACT

This article poses the need for the integration of personal and social change in teacher education. Components of a model synthesizing these two aspects of change are put forth. An in-service project to train teachers to deal with racism and sexism that utilized this model as its theoretical base is described. An evaluation of the effectiveness of this application of the personal/social change model is presented and conclusions are drawn.

Teachers, as other human beings, seek sources of renewed personal energy and fresh perspectives from which to see the world in their years of life-long learning. This article presents a model that integrates personal and social change in teacher training and describes its application in a program dealing with racism and sexism.

The need for the study abstracted below arises because very often educators who want to foster change focus on either personal or on societal change alone. Advocates of a personal approach to change include some humanistic educators, counselors, and psychologists, who argue that change is brought about by transforming individuals. Advocates of a social approach to change include some educational sociologists, organizational theroists, social scientists, and social critics, who tend to argue that change is brought about by altering structures and systems. Each of these approaches to change - via personal transformation or via social transformation - is necessary but not sufficeint. An integrative model for synthesizing the two is required.

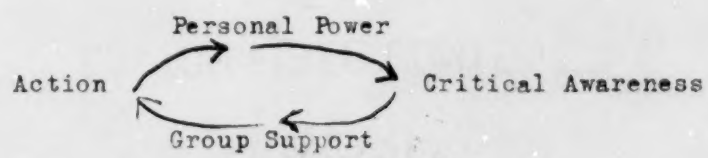
An inservice project for teacher renewal, "Classroom Strategies for Dealing with Racism and Sexism," utilized such an integrative model as its theoretical base. This particular course was chosen for application of the model for several reasons. 1)American educators have recently become more conscious of the ways racism and sexism affect student learning and are seeking methods to deal with these concerns in their classes. 2)The issues of racism and sexism are often treated separately. While

there are very significant differences between the two forms of oppression, both are largely a product of our political, economic and social system. The model here will facilitate peoples' perceiving the similarities between these two areas and will enable them to deal concurrently with both. 3) Finally, racism and sexism clearly embody both the personal and social domains.

Summarized in this paper is an evaluation of a teacher training project in racism and sexism that sought to foster development of components of a theoretical model integrating personal and social change.

Elements of the Theoretical Model

From an analysis of three contemporary experiences which have as their goals both personal and social change, this author developed a theoretical model integrating personal and social change applicable to American educators.[1] A simple visual portrayal of this model is designed as follows:



The four key elements in the model, personal power, group support, critical awareness, and action, were operationalized for utilization in the racism and sexism training program. The development of <u>personal power</u> would be manifested by an increased:

1) sense of self-worth and self-confidence
2) self-knowledge
3) feeling that one can take responsibility for and change oneself
4) belief that one can facilitate change in society.

The development of group support would be manifested by an increased:

1) trust in the group and a willingness to take risks

2) sense of community

3) willingness to rely on members of the group and be relied on by them

4) feeling of the power of the group and personal power from the group.

Critical awareness of racism and sexism was defined to entail an increased awareness of the following:

1) how our society fosters racism/sexism

2) how the individual is a victim and a perpetuator of racism and sexism

3) how our political, economic and social system has affected our beliefs and behaviors regarding racism/sexism

4) alternatives for dealing with racism and sexism.

The fourth important element of the model, action, entailed the development of:

1) small anti-racist and anti-sexist actions

2) an anti-racist and/or anti-sexist project for the classroom manifesting the designer's critical awareness of racism/sexism

Program Design and Procedure

This author designed components, methods, readings and activities for a training project, "Classroom Strategies for Dealing with Racism and Sexism," that she hypothesized would facilitate the development of the four elements in the personal/social change model; personal power, group support, critical awareness, and action.[2] This racism and sexism training program for teachers is uniquely characterized by its inclusion of the four following foci;

experiential learning, cognitive analysis, a process focus, and the development of teaching skills. In this course, much learning is done experientially - by interacting with others, through simulated experiences, and by participating in structures designed for examining oneself and the world. There is a strong emphasis on increased cognitive knowledge and on obtaining more diverse analytical frameworks for understanding racism and sexism, through numerous readings and class discussions. A process focus is constant, with attention given to interpersonal interaction, personal feelings, and group process. Finally, teaching skills are emphasized by very practical focussing on methods to deal with racism and sexism in the classroom.

"Classroom Strategies for Dealing with Racism and Sexism" was taught in the fall of 1974 to 14 teachers from St. Mary's County, Maryland, and again in summer, 1975 to 19 teachers from Prince George's County, Maryland. The teachers taught at all levels from pre-school to high school. Thirty worked in public schools, and 3 in private or parochial schools. Thirty were white and 3 were black. There were 28 women and 5 men.

The fall course met for a six hour introductory workshop on a Saturday and then met each Monday evening for three hours for 15 weeks. The summer session was held during two 3-day weekend workshops, also totaling 50 hours. The course was offered under the auspices of the Institute for Humanistic Education, a non-profit educational organization that gives workshops, and it carried three graduate credits from the University of Maryland.

The control group was comprised of fifteen in-service teachers who were enrolled in a graduate course through the University of Maryland, taught by a faculty member from that university. The course, "Analysis and Modification of Teaching Behavior," focussed on ways to evaluate teacher performance, conferencing skills, human relations, and micro-teaching.

Methods utilized to evaluate the development of personal power and group support were a pre-post Likert-type measure, written material of participants, and the instructor's observational record. A questionnaire was developed and validated to measure participants' perception of personal power and group support.[5] The measure was administered to the training group and control group at the beginning and end of the respective courses. A t-test was utilized to determine if statistically significant changes occured. Participants kept journals to record experience, thoughts, and feelings. These journals, with course evaluations, were read for data regarding development of personal power and group support. The instructor kept an anecdotal record of her observations during the course.

An essay type questionnaire was developed to measure participants' critical awareness of racism and sexism. Four essay questions were designed for the measure, each one corresponding to one of the four aspects involving a critical awareness of racism and sexism, as defined above. For each question, criteria were determined by which to assess the level of critical

awareness, and a simple scoring system designated. By tallying points, the development of critical awareness of racism and sexism could be depicted numerically and graphically. No attempts were made at a more formal type of evaluation using a number of trained raters. Written materials of participants and instructor observation were used to assess critical awareness of racism and sexism.

Participants were expected to develop a project for their classroom to deal with racism and sexism. These projects, with a statement of rationale, procedure, and evaluation, were studied to assess development of action. Written materials of participants and instructor observations were similarly utilized.

Findings

Results from the evaluation of program participants indicate significant increase in all four elements of the personal/social change model - personal power, group support, critical awareness of racism and sexism, and action. For purposes of this paper it is necessary to condense a more complete set of findings into a brief form.

1) Development of personal power: A significant increase in personal power was evidenced among training group members and not among controls, as measured by a t-test. For the fall group, identified as Group A, significance was computed at the .01 level, and for the summer group, known as Group B, significance put at .02. In written materials teachers describe feelings of greater self-confidence, self-knowledge, and strength to change themselves and their environment. People express that they are more

Assessment Procedures

This evaluation is based on a field experiment approach to research. While the strengths of field experiment research include appropriateness in studying complex social influences, processes and changes in life-like settings, the drawbacks include the difficulty in controlling variables.[3] An important strength of this type of research is the attempt to bridge the gap between theory and practice. "Action research must be valued for its major contribution: reality based social research which can give insight and needed assistance to those in applied work by identifying practices which have been useful and those of little value."[4] This evaluation has such goals. It attempts to gain useful information about the personal/social change model and its implementation in the racism and sexism training program by assessing program participants' responses concerning the four elements in the model - personal power, group support, critical awareness of racism and sexism, and action.

Both quantitative and qualitative measures were employed in this study. Increases in personal power and group support were analyzed statistically. An attempt was made to measure the qualitative data in such a manner that an independent investigator examining the same data would reach similar conclusions, although this step was not tested in this study.

A control group was employed to compare increases in personal power, group support and critical awareness of racism and sexism.

able to feel assertive and take risks with others regarding racism and sexism. Some attribute this new-found strength to greater self-knowledge. For some, the realization that they can make changes helped catalyze a greater sense of personal power. A small number of participants express a decline in personal power, because of their greater understanding of the extent and institutionalization of racism and sexism. The instructors' observations parallel participants' reports. She saw numerous examples of participants' pride upon accomplishing action goals. For similar reasons noted by participants she recorded a decline in personal power in a few people. By all measures, for the great majority, evidence manifests a significant development of personal power.

2) Development of group support: An extremely significant increase in group support was manifested by the training group members and not by controls. A t-test for Group A showed significance at .001, for Group B at .001, and no significance for the controls. In written materials a great majority of participants expressed they felt a growing sense of community, trust in group members, encouragement and support from others, and a genuine caring of people for each other. Some participants expressed the importance of the group as a place to share feelings and experiences with similarly concerned people. Most teachers appreciated the atmosphere of warmth and togetherness. A few participants experienced limited amounts of group support. Some of these people felt support from some members of the group but not from others.

A few point to their own detachment and other priorities as a reason for the limited group support that they experienced. The instructor recorded willingness of group members to share feelings and experiences, to cooperate outside of class in the exchange of materials and ideas, and to initiate group action projects. In Group A she noted two participants withdrawing from the group, in part, because of their disagreement with the structure of the course. Overall, a very high degree of group support developed.

3)Critical awareness of racism and sexism: The training groups increased in critical awareness of racism and sexism while the control group regressed slightly. Specifically, an increase of thirty points was evidenced among Group A, fifty-three among Group B, and a decline of two points among controls. In their writings, teachers manifested an expanded critical awareness of racism and sexism in our country and ways it is perpetuated. Many perceived how they help foster racism and sexism. Implicit in their action steps was increased critical awareness, as these steps sprang from a heightened consciousness of racist and sexist attitudes and behaviors in their classrooms, schools, and the media. The instructor perceived changes in this variable as well. Initially there was talk about "color blindness" and statements that their schools weren't racist or sexist. However, these types of statements weren't heard later in the course. After viewing films, discussing books

or reflecting on activities, participants' comments increasingly evidenced critical awareness. The instructor noted factors hindering critical awareness. In their daily teaching, participants dealt on a very specific, concrete level with students and peers, and thus in that context, it was difficult for some to view issues from a broader perspective. In addition, peoples' cultural conditioning of looking to personal causes rather than societal causes sometimes impeded critical awareness and encouraged guilt instead. Overall, by various measures, in-service teachers reflected a substantial rise in critical awareness of racism and sexism.

4) Development of action: The development of action was shown in both a major project created for teachers' classrooms or schools and in small anti-racist and anti-sexist actions. All 33 participants completed a major action project and implemented it in their classroom or school. In the judgement of the instructor, 16 projects were outstanding in design, implementation, and reflection of a critical awareness of racism and sexism; 11 were good, and 6 adequate. Participants in Group A were asked to record in their journals goals for anti-racist and anti-sexist actions and to note their degree of effectiveness in meeting those goals. Of the three-quarters of teachers who kept journals and recorded such action goals, all met the vast majority of goals they set for themselves. The instructor noted various signs of action among participants. Most basic were their reports of sharing new learnings with friends and spouses. Most extensive were the formation of

year-long action projects, curriculum designs, and task forces to confront racism and sexism in their schools. Many steps fell inbetween these poles. The biggest hindrance to action was teachers' discouragement with the slow pace of change coming from their energetic efforts. In sum, by the end of the program and continuing beyond, in-service teachers had taken a variety of steps to act to deal with racism and sexism in their educational settings.

Conclusion

The results of this study have been reported. As a consequence of the training program, significant gains were made by program participants in the four elements of the personal/social change model - personal power, group support, critical awareness of racism and sexism, and action. The theoretical speculation that the course catalyzed the integration of personal and social change is elaborated by practical evidence.

Personal change was defined, for purposes of this study, as the movement of the individual toward greater freedom to develop her/his fullest potential. From the evidence available, there are clear indications that the vast majority of participants have a broadened perspective of both the possibilities for self-development and alternative approaches to that development. They have gained more knowledge of themselves, a greater sense of personal power, and have altered values, beliefs and behaviors in such a direction as to expand the possibilities for their development.

Social change was defined, for purposes of this study, as the movement of society in the direction that allows for greater freedom for all individuals to develop their fullest potential,

the reduction of oppressive political, economic and social restraints on people, and the development of a humane, cooperative, equalitarian society. Peoples' increased critical awareness and subsequent reactions toward the elimination of racist and sexist beliefs and behaviors can be seen as small beginnings of a movement toward a less oppressive and more liberating society. Both types of change occured concurrently and cyclically in participants over the time span of the courses.

The findings presented in this study of a racism and sexism training program suggest that teacher educators can effectively catalyze [illegible] teachers' capacities to understand and encourage change on both a personal and societal level. We conclude in the words of one course participant, "I learned more about myself, and that I can do something about racism and sexism and that I want to do something about racism and sexism. . . . I feel power, strength and hopefullness."

FOOTNOTES

[1] For detail on the development of this model see Schniedewind, Nancy, "A Model Integrating Personal and Social Change in Teacher Education: Its Implementation in a Racism and Sexism Training Program", University of Massachusetts, 1975, unpublished dissertation.

[2] For a sourcebook of the activities used in this racism and sexism training program, see Schniedewind, Nancy, Confronting Racism and Sexism: A Practical Handbook for Educators, available from Educational Studies Department, State University College, New Paltz, New York, 12561.

[3] Kerlinger, F., Foundations of Behavioral Research: Educational, Psychological and Sociological Inquiry (Holt, Rinehart and Winston, 1973), pp. 382-386.

[4] Gluckstern, Norma, "Parents as Lay Counsellors: The Development of a Systematic Program for Drug Counsellors," University of Massachusetts, 1972, unpublished dissertation, p. 65.

[5] For complete data on the evaluation of this study see this author's dissertation, cited above.